

## Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act

*October 4, 1993*

*Memorandum for Heads of Departments and Agencies*

*Subject: The Freedom of Information Act*

I am writing to call your attention to a subject that is of great importance to the American public and to all Federal departments and agencies—the administration of the Freedom of Information Act, as amended (the “Act”). The Act is a vital part of the participatory system of government. I am committed to enhancing its effectiveness in my Administration.

For more than a quarter century now, the Freedom of Information Act has played a unique role in strengthening our democratic form of government. The statute was enacted based upon the fundamental principle that an informed citizenry is essential to the democratic process and that the more the American people know about their government the better they will be governed. Openness in government is essential to accountability and the Act has become an integral part of that process.

The Freedom of Information Act, moreover, has been one of the primary means by which members of the public inform themselves about their government. As Vice President Gore made clear in the National Performance Review, the

American people are the Federal Government’s customers. Federal departments and agencies should handle requests for information in a customer-friendly manner. The use of the Act by ordinary citizens is not complicated, nor should it be. The existence of unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles has no place in its implementation.

I therefore call upon all Federal departments and agencies to renew their commitment to the Freedom of Information Act, to its underlying principles of government openness, and to its sound administration. This is an appropriate time for all agencies to take a fresh look at their administration of the Act, to reduce backlogs of Freedom of Information Act requests, and to conform agency practice to the new litigation guidance issued by the Attorney General, which is attached.

Further, I remind agencies that our commitment to openness requires more than merely responding to requests from the public. Each agency has a responsibility to distribute information on its own initiative, and to enhance public access through the use of electronic information systems. Taking these steps will ensure compliance with both the letter and spirit of the Act.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

## Nomination for Posts at the Department of Defense

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The President announced his intention today to nominate public health expert Stephen C. Joseph to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; former Pentagon official Richard Danzig to be Under Secretary of the Navy; and economic policy specialist Joshua Gotbaum to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Economic Security.

“The people who we are adding to our Pentagon team today are recognized experts in their fields and dedicated public servants,” said President Clinton. “I welcome their service at the Department of Defense.”

NOTE: The President also announced the following appointments to senior Defense Department posts not requiring confirmation by the Senate:

Cliff Bernath, Deputy Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Operations

Joel Resnick, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Reserve Affairs/Strategic Plans and Analysis

Helen Forbeck, Senior Professional, Defense Reinvestment Assistance Task Force

John Rogers, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs/Plans & Operations

Mark Wagner, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Economic Security